

Message Text

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AMEMBASSY BERLIN

AMEMBASSY BUDAPEST

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

AMCONSUL MUNICH

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY PRAGUE

AMEMBASSY SOFIA

USMISSION USNATO

AMEMBASSY WARSAW

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 BUCHAREST 5214

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, PINR, SCUL, RO

SUBJECT: AFTERMATH OF PLASTIC ARTISTS' CONFERENCE: ATTEMPT
TO DISMISS OUTSPOKEN EDITOR BACKFIRES

REF: BUCHAREST 4843

1. SUMMARY: AS REPORTED REFTEL, LIBERAL CHIEF
EDITOR OF LITERARY REVIEW "SECOLUL 20," DAN HAULICA, WAS
A PROMINENT AND POINTED CRITIC OF THE COUNCIL OF SOCIALIST CULTURE
AND EDUCATION AND ESPECIALLY COUNCIL VICE-PRESIDENT
TAMARA DOBRIN AT JUNE 22-23 PLASTIC ARTISTS' CONFERENCE.
APPARENTLY AT DOBRIN'S INSTIGATION, AN UNSUCCESSFUL ATTEMPT
WAS MADE TO DISMISS HAULICA FROM "SECOLUL 20" CHIEF EDITOR-
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SHIP DURING JULY 7-10. OFFICIAL RATIONALE WAS THAT
HAULICA HAD ALLEGEDLY "ENGAGED IN POLEMICS WITH THE
PRESIDENT" AT THE PLASTIC ARTISTS' CONFERENCE. MOVE WAS
THWARTED BY UNANIMITY OF PROMINENT MEMBERS OF THE REVIEW'S
EDITORIAL BOARD IN DEFENDING HAULICA AGAINST COUNCIL
VICE-PRESIDENT DUMITRU GHISE AND WRITERS' UNION PRESIDENT
GEORGE MACOVESCU, WHO HAD BEEN ASSIGNED TO CARRY OUT

THE DISMISSAL.

2. WHILE CEAUSESCU'S FOREKNOWLEDGE OF THE MOVE IS UN-CONFIRMED, IT SEEMS CLEAR THAT HE TOOK FINAL DECISION TO LET HAULICA STAY. CONSEQUENCES ARE FURTHER JEOPARDY TO POSITION OF TAMARA DOBRIN, LONG A FAVORED BUREAUCRATIC TARGET OF INTELLECTUAL CRITICISM, AND LOSS OF AUTHORITY AMONG WRITERS BY EX-FOREIGN MINISTER MACOVESCU, WHO WAS FORCED INTO AN ABRUPT AND UNSEEMLY ROLE-CHANGE FROM HATCHET-MAN TO COMPROMISER. EPISODE THUS REPRESENTS A CLEAR-CUT IF LIMITED VICTORY FOR ROMANIAN INTELLECTUALS AGAINST CULTURAL BUREAUCRACY, AND PROVIDES BOTH AN UNUSUAL INSIGHT INTO ROMANIAN POLITICAL DECISION-MAKING AND A GOOD EXAMPLE OF CEAUSESCU'S DEFT ABILITY TO TACKLE IN FACE OF POSSIBLY TROUBLESOME DISCONTENT. END SUMMARY.

3. SETTING AND CHARACTERS.. REFTEL REPORTS THAT SEVERAL SPEAKERS AT JUNE 22-23 CONFERENCE OF NATIONAL UNION OF PLASTIC ARTISTS SINGLED OUT COUNCIL OF SOCIALIST CULTURE AND EDUCATION VICE-PRESIDENT TAMARA DOBRIN FOR POINTED CRITICISM. ONE OF MORE OUTSPOKEN WAS DAN HAULICA, AN ART CRITIC WHO HAS BEEN CHIEF EDITOR OF "SECOLUL 20" SINCE 1967. THE SMALL CIRCULATION (8-10,000) MONTHLY REVIEW IS PUBLISHED UNDER AUSPICES OF THE WRITERS' UNION AND IS MANAGED BY AN EDITORIAL BOARD OF 15 PROMINENT WRITERS WITH STRONG ESTABLISHMENT TIES; UNDER HAULICA'S EDITORSHIP IT HAS BE-CONFIDENTIAL

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COME ROMANIA'S MOST LIVELY, BEST-DESIGNED LITERARY AND ARTISTIC JOURNAL. WITH AN INTERNATIONAL SCOPE, IT WAS FIRST ROMANIAN FORUM FOR SUCH AMERICAN AUTHORS AS KURT VONNEGUT AND RICHARD BRAUTIGAN.

4. HAULICA, 46, IS WELL-REGARDED BY ROMANIAN INTELLECTUALS AS A "LIBERAL," AND WE HAVE HEARD REPORTS OF PREVIOUS ATTEMPTS BY COUNCIL OF SOCIALIST CULTURE AND EDUCATION, GOR'S DE FACTO CULTURE MINISTRY, TO REMOVE HIM. AT PLASTIC ARTISTS' CONFERENCE, HAULICA PICKED UP LINE FROM CEAUSESCU SPEECH THAT IMPOSITIONS OF ARTISTIC THEME ARE NOTHING NEW: MICHELANGELO HAD PAINTED THE SISTINE CHAPEL FRESCOES FROM AN "IMPOSED THEME." LATER, HAULICA OBSERVED TO DELEGATES THAT MICHELANGELO KEPT THE POPE OUT OF THE SISTINE CHAPEL DURING THREE YEARS' WORK, AND THAT SINCE MICHELANGELO PAINTED ONE OF HIS OPPONENTS IN HELL, HOW SHOULD ROMANIAN ARTISTS REPRESENT TAMARA DOBRIN?

5. PLOT. DOBRIN LAUGHED AT THE TIME, BUT EVENTS INDICATED THAT THE LADY WAS NOT AMUSED. ACCOUNT OF SUBSEQUENT EVENTS HAS BEEN OBTAINED FROM PARTICIPANTS. ON FRIDAY, JULY 7, HAULICA WAS SUMMONED TO COUNCIL OF SOCIALIST

CULTURE AND EDUCATION OFFICES, WHERE COUNCIL VICE-PRESIDENT DUMITRU GHISE TOLD HIM HE WAS BEING DISMISSED AS CHIEF EDITOR OF "SECOLUL 20." REASON WAS THAT HE HAD "ENGAGED IN POLEMICS WITH THE PRESIDENT" AT PLASTIC ARTISTS CONFERENCE. HAULICA WAS ADVISED THAT HE WOULD BE OFFICIALLY DISMISSED FOLLOWING DAY BY GHISE AND WRITERS' UNION PRESIDENT MACOVESCU AT A MEETING OF THE REVIEW'S EDITORIAL BOARD AND STAFF; ALEXANDRU BALACI, MEMBER OF EDITORIAL BOARD, WOULD REPLACE HIM. (WHILE TAMARA DOBRIN'S BEHIND-THE-SCENES ROLE IS UNCONFIRMED, STRONG CONSENSUS IS THAT SHE INSTIGATED THE MOVE.) RETURNING TO "SECOLUL 20" OFFICES, HAULICA INFORMED HIS STAFF, WHO DECIDED TO RESIST THE MOVE AND CONTACTED MEMBERS OF EDITORIAL BOARD. MEANWHILE, HAULICA WENT TO "AGERPRES" NEWS AGENCY AND STENOGRAPHERS
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OF PLASTIC ARTISTS' CONFERENCE TO RECONSTRUCT A TEXT OF HIS EXTEMPORANEOUS REMARKS TO CONFERENCE.

6. ON SATURDAY, JULY 8, MACOVESCU AND GHISE CONVENED DISMISSAL MEETING. WITH SCANT EXPLANATION THEY ANNOUNCED "IT HAD BEEN DECIDED" THAT HAULICA (WHO HAD SOME "IMPROPER ATTITUDES") WOULD BE REPLACED BY BALACI. WITH ONE EXCEPTION, ALL MEMBERS OF EDITORIAL BOARD IN BUCHAREST WERE PRESENT,

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AND ALL INCLUDING BALACI DEFENDED AND PRAISED HAULICA, AS DID STAFF MEMBERS. SEVEAL SPEAKERS REVIEWED HAULICA'S REMARKS TO PLASTIC ARTISTS, SAYING THEY HAD BEEN DISTORTED AND THAT THIS WAS A CASE OF "TENDENTIOUS MISINTERPRETATION, SLANDER, CALUMNY." OTHER THEMES WERE HAULICA'S GOOD WORK AND IMPORTANCE OF "SECOLUL 20" TO ROMANIAN INTELLECTUALS, AND PRECEDENTS THAT DISMISSAL WOULD SET. ONE SPEAKER SAID THAT DISMISSAL WOULD RECALL THE DAYS OF STALIN; CINEMATOGRAPHY PROFESSOR FLORIAN POTRA SAID THAT IF EXPRESSING AN OPINION HAD SUCH CONSEQUENCES, HE WOULD CERTAINLY NOT BE A PROFESSOR AFTER NEXT AUTUMN'S CINEMATOGRAPHERS' CONFERENCE. CONTENT OF REMARKS WAS QUIETLY UNDERSCORED BY ESTABLISHMENT TIES OF HAULICA'S DEFENDERS, WHO INCLUDED EUGEN JEBELEANU, CANDIDATE MEMBER IN RCP CENTRAL COMMITTEE AND VICE-CHAIRMAN OF THE SOCIALIST UNITY FRONT, AND ZOE
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DUMITRESCU-BUSULENGA.

7. WITH MEETING CLEARLY OUT OF OFFICIAL CONTROL, SPEAKERS REHASHED COMPLAINTS VOICED AT PLASTIC ARTISTS' CONFERENCE ABOUT "INCOMPETENCE" OF THE COUNCIL OF SOCIALIST CULTURE AND EDUCATION. WHEN MACOVESCU OBJECTED TO UNINVITED PRESENCE OF GEO BOGZA, 71, DEAN OF ROMANIAN ESTABLISHMENT WRITERS, BOGZA REPORTEDLY TURNED ON THE EX-FOREIGN MINISTER (WHOM SOME ROMANIAN WRITERS PRONOUNCE TO BE NOT MUCH OF A WRITER) WITH: "LOOK AT THIS MAN; WHAT HAS HE DONE FOR ROMANIAN CULTURE?" MEETING CONCLUDED WITH JEBELEANU THREATENING TO GO TO HIGHER LEVELS, GHISE PROMISING TO INFORM PARTY LEADERSHIP OF OPINION, AND MACOVESCU REPORTEDLY OBSERVING THAT THE PROCEEDINGS HAD BEEN DISTASTEFUL: PARTY DECISIONS, ONCE CAREFULLY TAKEN, ARE NOT TO BE QUESTIONED.

8. ENTER DEUS EX MACHINA. WHILE IT IS UNCLEAR WHETHER DECISION TO FIRE HAULICA WAS APPROVED BY CEAUSESCU, IT APPEARS THAT SOMEONE (POSSIBLY DUMITRU POPESCU, CHAIRMAN OF NATIONAL COUNCIL OF RADIO AND TELEVISION) ADVISED CEAUSESCU OF GOINGS-ON AT SATURDAY'S MEETING. RUMOR BASED ON OBVIOUS CEAUSESCU DECISION TO LET HAULICA STAY IS THAT CEAUSESCU ACQUITTED THE EDITOR OF LESE-MAJESTE; NEW MEETING WAS CALLED FOR MONDAY, JULY 10. GHISE AND MACOVESCU, AGAIN PRESIDING, ANNOUNCED REVERSAL AND TOLD EDITORIAL

BOARD AND STAFF THAT THE MATTER HAD BEEN A MISUNDERSTANDING, "THERE ARE COMRADES WHO SPREAD SLANDEROUS RUMORS, NEVER CHECK INTO FACTS, MISINFORM THE PARTY, AND THAT IS WHY RASH DECISIONS ARE TAKEN," MACOVESCU REPORTEDLY SAID. ALTHOUGH HAULICA REMAINS AT "SECOLUL 20," WE ARE UNSURE WHETHER DECISION REPORTED REFTTEL TO BAN HIM FROM TV STANDS.

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9. COMMENT: IF TAMARA DOBRIN WAS IN FACT THE INSTIGATOR AND HOPED THEREBY TO RECOUP AUTHORITY LOST AMID CRITICISM AT PLASTIC ARTISTS' CONFERENCE, THE MOVE BACKFIRED. THERE ARE PERSISTENT RUMORS SHE IS BEING CONSIDERED FOR AN AMBASSADORSHIP. MACOVESCU'S ABRUPT ROLE-REVERSAL COST HIM CREDIBILITY WITH WRITERS, WHOM HE IS SUPPOSED TO SUPERVISE, AND AN AMBASSADORIAL JOB IS RUMORED FOR HIM AS WELL. ON THE OTHER HAND, COUNCIL VICE-PRESIDENT DUMITRU GHISE IS REGARDED BY INTELLECTUALS AS A PURELY PARTY APPARATCHIK; LACKING PRESTIGE TO LOSE BY INVOLVEMENT IN SCHEME, HE LOST NONE. BUREAUCRATIC ERRORS WHICH TURNED HAULICA FIRING INTO A FIASCO FOR ITS MOVERS WERE SUDDENNESS OF ATTEMPT AND OMISSION OF PRIOR CONSULTATION WITH REVIEW'S PROMINENT AND HOSTILE EDITORIAL BOARD, WHOSE REACTION PROVED TO BE A FACTOR AGAINST WHICH CEAUSESCU HAD TO TACK. WHILE PLEASED ABOUT THE OUTCOME, INTELLECTUALS REGARD THEIR CONFLICT WITH CULTURAL BUREAUCRACY AS CONTINUING, AND THE GOR'S RELATIONSHIP WITH ITS INTELLECTUALS, NOW CHARACTERIZED BY OFFICIAL RESTRAINT, REMAINS AS UNEASY AS EVER.
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